

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----221845Z 042312 /41
R 221735Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3491

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 4697

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IT
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR GARDNER PRESENTS HIS CREDENTIALS AND CALLS
ON FOREIGN MINISTER

1. PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS

AS A SYMBOLIC GESTURE OF THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHES TO RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, PRESIDENT LEONE RECEIVED ME FOR PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS WITH UNUSUAL CELERITY AND CORDIALITY ON THE DAY OF MY ARRIVAL IN ROME. WE HAD A 40-MINUTE, PRIVATE CONVERSATION DURING WHICH I OUTLINED TO HIM THE BASIC POLICY, GOALS, AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. I TOLD HIM THAT PRESIDENT CARTER REGARDS ITALY AS ONE OF AMERICA'S INNER CIRCLE OF CLOSE FRIENDS AND ALLIES. LEONE RECIPROCATED WITH WARM AND HEARTFELT WORDS OF FRIENDSHIP FOR AND COOPERATION WITH AMERICA AND WITH A VERY CORDIAL WELCOME TO ME. IN KEEPING WITH CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS ON HIS POWERS, PRESIDENT LEONE AVOIDED DISCUSSING IN DETAIL ANY SPECIFIC PROBLEMS, WITH ONE EXCEPTION: HE DID URGE THE DESIRABILITY OF FINDING WAYS FOR ITALIAN PRIVATE INDUSTRY TO RAISE MONEY IN THE WORLD'S PRIVATE CAPITAL MARKETS. IN
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THIS CONNECTION HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE US COMPTROLLER OF THE CURRENCY MAY BE DISCOURAGING LENDING TO ITALY BY AMERICAN PRIVATE BANKS. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE USG WOULD FIND WAYS OF ENCOURAGING SUCH LENDING RATHER THAN DISCOURAGING IT.

2. CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER: ON MARCH 22

I HAD AN HOUR AND 45-MINUTE CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI. I TOOK THE OCCASION TO REVIEW AT SOME LENGTH PRESIDENT CARTER'S ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS, FOLLOWING THE OUTLINE IN STATE 62223 AND ELABORATING ON SOME POINTS ON THE BASIS OF MY PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWS ON VARIOUS ISSUES.

3. IN REPLY, FORLANI SAID THAT HE "FULLY AGREES" WITH THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ON THE NEED TO EMPHASIZE OUR IDEOLOGY ON THIS ISSUE AND TO ELIMINATE THE DOUBLE STANDARD WHICH HAS SO LONG PREVAILED IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND ELSEWHERE. HE DID NOT COMMENT ON MY STATEMENT THAT WE WOULD LOOK TO ITALY FOR SUPPORT ON THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSALS FOR STRENGTHENING THE UN'S HUMAN RIGHTS MACHINERY.

4. FORLANI ALSO SAID THAT HE FULLY ENDORSED THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWS ON THE EXTREME IMPORTANCE OF MAKING PROGRESS ON SALT, BOTH IN TERMS OF REDUCING EXISTING STOCKS OF NUCLEAR AND STRATEGIC WEAPONS AS WELL AS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PUTTING A FREEZE ON NEW GENERATIONS OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS. FORLANI ADDED THAT, ON THE BASIS OF HIS RECENT VISIT TO MOSCOW, HE FEELS CERTAIN THAT BREZHNEV AND THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ARE VERY ANXIOUS TO PURSUE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES ON THESE ISSUES. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, COMMENT ON MY STATEMENT THAT WE WOULD ALSO SEEK TO REDUCE WORLDWIDE TRANSFERS OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS.

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5. ON ECONOMIC ISSUES, FORLANI COMMENTED APPRECIATIVELY ON THE VARIOUS ACTIONS THAT THE USG IS TAKING, INCLUDING OUR DESIRE TO MAKE PROGRESS IN THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE. HE ALSO EXPRESSED IN STRONG TERMS THE HOPE THAT GERMANY AND JAPAN COULD BE PERSUADED TO STIMULATE THEIR ECONOMIES FURTHER AND THAT THEY WOULD TAKE SUCH ACTIONS BEFORE THE MAY SUMMIT IN LONDON.

6. DESPITE MY INVITATION TO COMMENT ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST, FORLANI LIMITED HIMSELF TO SAYING THAT HE HAS THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS MUCH MORE DISPOSED TO SEEK A SOLUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND TO PURSUE WHATEVER MEANS MAY BE AVAILABLE FOR A REDUCTION OF TENSIONS IN THE AREA.

7. I TOOK THE OCCASION OF THIS CONVERSATION TO DESCRIBE TO FORLANI U.S. POLICY AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ITALY. I TOLD HIM, AS I DID LEONE, THAT WE REGARD ITALY AS A KEY COUNTRY AND ONE THAT IS AMONG THE INNER

CIRCLE OF OUR CLOSEST FRIENDS AND ALLIES. I TOLD HIM THAT I WOULD IN PUBLIC EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE THAT WE ATTACH TO OUR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ITALY, AND OUR INTEREST IN SEEING IT SOLVE ITS DIFFICULT PROBLEMS IN A DEMOCRATIC CONTEXT. I WOULD EXPRESS MY BELIEF THAT THE BASIC CHOICES CAN ONLY BE MADE BY ITALIANS AND EMPHASIZE OUR DETERMINATION NOT TO INTERFERE IN ITALY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. I ADDED THAT, WHILE THIS WILL BE OUR PUBLIC STANCE, THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AND ITS LEADERS SHOULD NOT BE UNDER ANY MISAPPREHENSION ABOUT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE COMMUNIST PARTY. OUR PREFERENCE REMAINS THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. FORLANI EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THESE REMARKS AND POINTED OUT THAT, WHILE DIRECT INTERFERENCE IS OBVIOUSLY UNDESIRABLE AND UNWANTED, THE UNITED STATES BY ITS ACTIONS DOES HAVE AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON EVENTS IN ITALY. WITH REGARD TO MY
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STATEMENT THAT ITALY IS AND REMAINS ONE OF OUR CLOSEST FRIENDS AND ALLIES, FORLANI SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 4697

EXDIS

OUR ACTIONS WOULD MAKE THIS APPARENT BECAUSE THE ITALIAN PUBLIC (AND OTHERS) INEVITABLY DREW INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS BETWEEN OUR CLOSE RELATIONS WITH LONDON, PARIS, AND BONN AND THOSE WITH ROME. HE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE THE SECRETARY'S PLANNED STOPS IN THOSE THREE

CITIES UPON HIS RETURN FROM MOSCOW, COMMENTING THAT OUR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ITALY ALWAYS SEEMED TO REQUIRE A SPECIAL EFFORT RATHER THAN BEING AUTOMATIC AND EASILY DEMONSTRABLE AS IT IS WITH LONDON, PARIS, AND BONN. I ASSURED FORLANI THAT PRESIDENT CARTER DOES INDEED REGARD ITALY AS AN IMPORTANT COUNTRY WITH WHOM WE MUST HAVE THE CLOSEST RELATIONS, BUT I TOOK THE OCCASION TO EMPHASIZE THAT IF ITALY WANTS TO BE A MEMBER OF THE INNER CIRCLE IT MUST MAKE A SUBSTANTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEMS AT HAND. THE POINT WAS, I BELIEVE, UNDERSTOOD.

8. WITH REGARD TO THE ITALIAN DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION, FORLANI EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT SOMEHOW OR OTHER A SOLUTION WOULD BE FOUND TO THE PRESENT CRISIS (ROME 4613) AND THAT THE PRESIDENT GOVERNMENTAL FORMULA WOULD LAST FOR SOME TIME PRIMARILY BECAUSE THERE IS NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE ACCEPTABLE TO THE PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS. HE BELIEVES THAT EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WOULD BE A GREAT MISTAKE BECAUSE HE
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THINKS THE COMMUNIST PARTY, HAVING THE ADVANTAGE OF OPPOSITION, WOULD PROBABLY GAIN, BUT THAT, EVEN IF THE DC GAINED OR HELD ITS OWN, IT COULD DO SO ONLY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SMALL DEMOCRATIC LAY PARTIES. HIS EXPRESSED HOPE IS THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENTAL FORMULA WILL LAST AT LEAST UNTIL THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN THE SUMMER OF 1978. GARDNER

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